



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO MR GAMANI COREA, SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)***

*To His Excellency
Mr Gamani Corea,
Secretary-General United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*

Human advancement, the upholding of the hope of peoples struggling in precarious and often crushing conditions, and helping humanity to regain control of its material and social universe: these are the subjects at the heart of the deliberations of the Fifth Conference of the United Nations on Trade and Development, meeting in Manila.

These preoccupations are also shared by the Holy See and the whole Church. I am writing to you, Mr Secretary-General, in order to offer to this common task, together with my fraternal encouragement, a spiritual and ethical contribution drawn from the heritage of the Gospel.

It is our shared conviction that the courage of the concrete decisions that must be taken and the inspiration of new ideas for directing the future will come from people who have been made more aware of their unsurpassable dignity, more aware of the creative possibilities of their minds, more aware of the potential of their different cultures, more aware of the powerful moral dynamism which impels them to seek justice, peace and fraternal cooperation. These are realities that, in the eyes of a believer, have a depth and a guarantee that come from God. God has made us all in his own image and likeness, and his Son Jesus Christ, by becoming man himself, has in a certain manner united himself to every human being.

For development to be both effective and worthy, peoples have to count first of all on their work and on exchange. And this poses, at the basis of practically all the items on the Agenda of the

Conference, the fundamental questions of the just price and the just contract.

These are eminently human and moral questions, and they have to be considered in all their constitutive dimensions.

One of these dimensions is, of course, remuneration for the work actually done by each individual. It is not the only dimension. It is also important to take into account the right of each people to make use of the goods which are more directly entrusted to its management, and whose reasonable and farsighted utilization conditions its free development. In addition, since work concerns human beings, their remuneration must enable them to live as befits human beings, to face all the tasks that fall to them, all the needs of human existence, beginning with the need to create, through employment, the very possibility of working. Furthermore, individuals and peoples live in solidarity: their remuneration should manifest this solidarity, within each country and between countries, and it must be seen to be a fair sharing in the material and cultural goods which are produced at a given stage of human history and which always have a universal destination.

It is necessary that all these exigencies, without exception, should be taken into account concretely in the contractual processes which seek to determine the amount of just prices. These processes cannot simply be left to the play of the market forces—which in fact are never natural but always constructed by people—nor to the dominant influence of small groups or to that of number. Every contract is a human matter, conducted by people and directed towards serving people. Only then will the market forces, set up, and periodically revised and diversified, be able to play their beneficial role: for they will function under the responsibility of individuals and peoples who are free, equal and linked by solidarity, and under the regulation of moral norms that are binding upon everybody.

Healthy competition of this sort is in its turn conditioned by "a wider and more immediate redistribution of riches and of control over them" (*Redemptoris Hominis*, 16). It is thus in this perspective that one must clarify and resolve the painful problem of the debts that weigh upon the poorer countries, the problem of common funds, the problem of a more adequate and more effective institutional framework of worldwide solidarity.

While the universal destination of goods is effected in part, through the medium of responsible appropriations and of exchanges, it also calls for institutions that more immediately express solidarity and sharing. What still exists, often in such an exemplary way, in the practice of hospitality and mutual help by the less advanced peoples, what has been reinstated elsewhere through national budgets and social security systems—namely, the desire to set aside an important part of wealth in order to make it directly available for common use and needs, quite apart from any logic of competition and exchange—all this must likewise find its place in the development of the worldwide human community. It is up to the Manila Conference to explore and

stimulate, with realism and generosity, all the opportunities now available for advancing along this path, in the order of production as well as in that of distribution.

Mr Secretary-General, I express the earnest hope that this Fifth Conference of the United Nations on Trade and Development, which you have prepared with such care and breadth of view, will produce the resolute decisions that the less privileged peoples and indeed all humanity await. May this exceptional meeting be at the same time the place where new ideas germinate, mature and spread, and where these ideas succeed in defining a new long-term strategy, able to halt the gigantic development of the situation referred to in the parable in the Bible concerning the rich banqueter and the poor man Lazarus (cf. *Redemptoris Hominis*, 16). May this exceptional meeting succeed in eliminating a situation which now humiliates mankind and stores up threats for the future, and thus infuse new hope into countless human beings.

I pray that God, our common Father, will bless the Manila Conference.

From the Vatican, 26 April 1979.

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